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Journal Vol:
Journal Issue:
Journal Year: 1989
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LATE BYZANTINE POTTERY FROM ISTHMIA: NEW EVIDENCE FROM THE KORINTHIA

In the years after the sack of Corinth by Roger II of Sicily in 1147 and, more significantly, after the Fourth Crusade, Corinth declined from its former position of dominance in southern Greece[1]. "...after a brief recovery as the capital of Villehardouin's domain, [the city] dwindled away so swiftly that by the end of the fourteenth century it had ceased to exist at all[2]." This decline is naturally reflected in the ceramic record where the standard works on Corinth include almost nothing later than the mid-thirteenth century. Thus, Morgan's catalogue discusses the well-known import of Proto-Majolica ware and the "lifeless and rather rough survival" of sgraffito wares into the thirteenth century, but in this period his chronology becomes imprecise and he notes that "very few vessels ... seem to have been made either during the fourteenth century, before the abandonment of the city, or in the fifteenth, after its resettlement[3]." Theodora Mackay devoted most of her attention to late Byzantine wares at Corinth, and she was able to refine some of Morgan's observations and push the chronology of several wares into the first quarter of the fourteenth century[4]. Nevertheless, Byzantine pottery of the fourteenth and fifteenth century in the Korinthia remains virtually unknown today.

Results of excavations at the site of the ancient Sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia hold the promise of filling this void (**fig. 1**)[5]. The earlier series of excavation at Isthmia, under the direction of Oscar Broneer, concentrated on the center of the classical sanctuary[6], while later excavations, under the direction of Paul A. Clement, focused

(1) In general see J. H. Finley, Jr., "Corinth in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 7 (1932), 477-98, esp. 482-94; Robert L. Scranton, *Corinth* XVI. *Medieval Architecture* (Princeton 1957), 84-86.

(2) Morgan 1942, p. 4; Michael Kodrosis, "Συμβολὴ στὴν ἱστορία καὶ τοπογραφία τῆς περιοχῆς Κορίνθου στοὺς μέσους χρόνους" (Athens 1981), 105-129.

(3) Morgan 1942, p. 157.

(4) Mackay 1967, pp. 250-251.

(5) I am indebted to the late Professor Paul A. Clement, former Director of Isthmia Excavations, who first allowed me to study and publish this material. Thanks are also due to Dr. John Camp, for his initial lessons in Byzantine pottery in the Athenian Agora, and to Mr. Guy Sanders, for allowing me to see his then-unpublished manuscript on "An Assemblage of Frankish Pottery at Corinth," *Hesperia* 56 (1987).

(6) See Oscar Broneer, *Isthmia*, Vol. I, *Temple of Poseidon* (Princeton 1971), and *Isthmia*, Vol. II, *Topography and Architecture* (Princeton 1973).

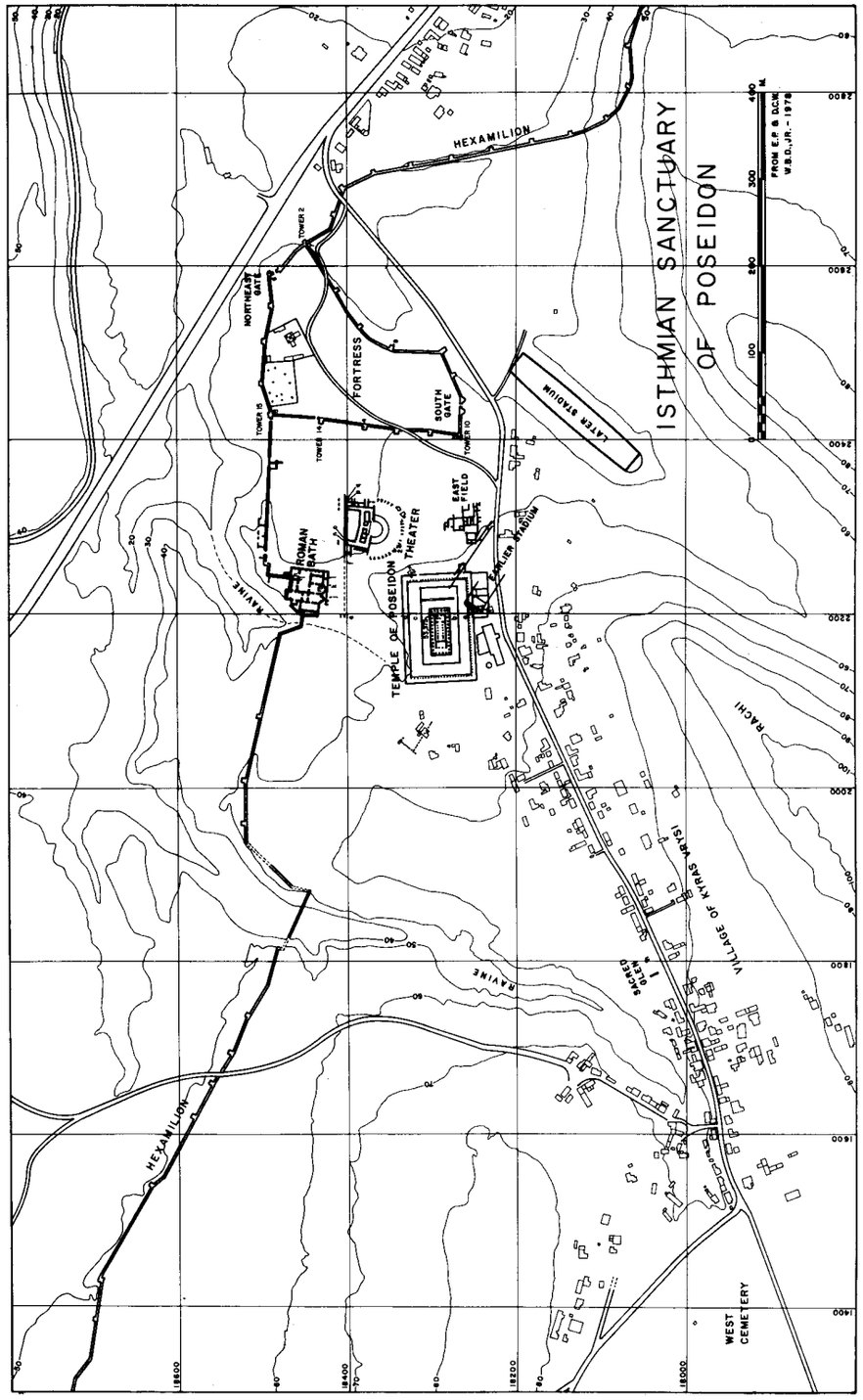

Fig. 1. — Isthmia, map.

much more on the Byzantine areas of the site, especially in the vicinity of the large Fortress on the Hexamilion, first built in the early years of the fifth century[7]. The Hexamilion was, of course, the longitudinal defense *(diateichisma)* across the Isthmus of Corinth, designed to protect the Peloponnesos against attack from the north; and it was rebuilt on many occasions throughout the Byzantine era, most notably by Justinian and probably also at the end of the tenth century[8].

Despite its physical and functional closeness to Corinth, in the middle and late Byzantine periods Isthmia had a very different history. While Corinth recovered from the barbarian invasions, beginning apparently in the ninth century, and reached the peak of its prosperity in the twelfth century[9], Isthmia remained essentially abandoned, the remains of the fortifications occupied only by occasional squatters. Some improvement is apparent in the twelfth century and substantial habitation is attested beginning in the thirteenth century. At the time when Corinth was declining, however, Isthmia seems to have gained in importance. Thus, as the power of the Ottoman Turks grew greater, through the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the Hexamilion came to be seen as the primary defense of the Christian powers in southern Greece. The despots of the Morea, the Venetians, and the Knights of Rhodes all discussed the possibility of rebuilding the Hexamilion, and the task was finally accomplished by the emperor Manuel II in 1415[10].

Some of the fine wares produced at Corinth in the twelfth century have been found at Isthmia, but much more common are pieces of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. These of course are not easily paralleled by published examples from Corinth or elsewhere, and their chronology must be based largely on evidence from Isthmia itself. Study currently underway will hopefully provide a complete chronology for these wares, but especially for the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the chronological markers are few and the number of closed deposits fewer still.

A crucial event for this study was Manuel II's reconstruction of 1415. This was apparently quite thorough, involving the excavation of trenches *(taphroi)* in front of the wall as well as rebuilding of many towers and, presumably, parts of the curtain wall. Because these repairs were concentrated primarily on the upper parts of the fortifications (which have fallen away over the succeeding centuries), there is little archaeological evidence for the actual fortification project. Nevertheless, activity associated with Manuel's reconstruction is visible in many areas of the excavation and this provides the fundamental starting point for an understanding of late Byzantine pottery at Isthmia.

In the discussion below no attempt is made to provide a full publication of the pottery. Instead, this paper is intended as a preliminary report of work in progress and

(7) See the reports by Clement in *ArchDelt.*, 1968-76.

(8) S. P. Lambros, "Ὁ Βίος Νίκωνος τοῦ Μετανοεῖτε", Νεός Ἑλληνομνήμων 3 (1906), pp. 174-175.

(9) D. M. Metcalf, "Corinth in the Ninth Century: The Numismatic Evidence," *Hesperia* 42 (1973), 180-251.

(10) S. P. Lambros, "Τὰ τείχη τοῦ Ἰσθμοῦ τῆς Κορίνθου κατὰ τοὺς μέσους αἰῶνας," Νεός Ἑλληνομνήμων 2 (1905), 435-489; 4 (1907), 20-26, 240-243; 5 (1908), 115-116; J. W. Barker, "On the Chronology of the Activities of Manuel II Palaeologus in the Morea in 1415," *ByzZ* 55 (1962), 39-55; Kodrosis, Συμβολή, 113-117.

an indication of the method and the kinds of late Byzantine pottery excavated at Isthmia. The groups presented below vary widely in number and two contain only a single example each; in addition the homogeneity and archaeological contexts of the groups also differ, since some are true deposits and others are not.

Group A (Tower 14).

Perhaps the most important group of late Byzantine pottery is from the area of Tower 14 along the West Fortress Wall (**fig. 1**)[11]. From the twelfth or thirteenth century this area included a gate (the so-called West Gate), which pierced the Fortress Wall just north of Tower 14. Probably attracted by the flow of traffic through the wall at this point, a number of structures were erected on both sides of the wall and on either side of the West Gate. Most of these have not been fully excavated, but that on the southwest side of the tower was exposed down to Byzantine ground level. This was a small building, ca. 5-6 m on a side, that used the south wall of the tower and the west face of the Fortress Wall in its construction; in the northwest corner there was a doorway that opened out to the west.

The floor of the building was covered with a thick layer of debris, undoubtedly resulting from its final destruction. Within this layer were fourteen coins. Two of these were early: one from the fourth, one from the tenth century. Of the remaining coins four are uncertain Venetian colonial issues, and one is of Isabelle de Villehardouin (1297-1302). Six coins were struck for Antonio Venerio (1382-1400), while one can be assigned to his successor, Michael Steno (1400-1413). This evidence suggests that the building was constructed sometime before 1415 but that, when the fortifications were rebuilt, it was considered a threat to security and destroyed.

A large number of pieces of late Byzantine pottery were found in this same destruction layer and they thus presumably reflect pottery in use in the early years of the fifteenth century. Some pieces may, of course, be earlier, but most are probably to be assigned to the fourteenth century or, more probably, the early years of the fifteenth century. The following are several of the wares represented.

IP 3660. Proto-Maiolica Bowl (**fig. 2a** and **b**).

Small bowl in reddish-brown clay (7.5 YR 7/6); on interior concentric circles in green, black, and red paint; dark yellow glaze on interior and over rim. The profile is that of Grid-Iron Ware[12], but the decoration is more similar to so-called RMR Ware[13]. Cf. Morgan 1942, no. 819, fig. 83b for profile, no. 822, pl. xxxvi for decoration: Proto-Majolica, Group I (13th century, although there are significant differences); probably a later Italian ware, perhaps related to Morgan's Later Proto-Majolica, Group I (14th-15th century), pp. 111-112.

IPB 69-40. Incised Sgraffito Bowl (**fig. 3a** and **b**).

Large bowl with straight sides and vertical rim in coarse red clay (2.5 YR 5/6); on interior careless geometric sgraffito and incised designs in brown glaze; on floor tripod marks. No good

(11) Tower 14 was excavated in 1967 and 1969; see P. A. Clement, *ArchDelt* 23 (1968), 142; 25 (1970), 163-164.

(12) D. Whitehouse, "Proto-Mailoica," *Faenza* 66 (1980), 81.

(13) *Ibid.*, 82-83.

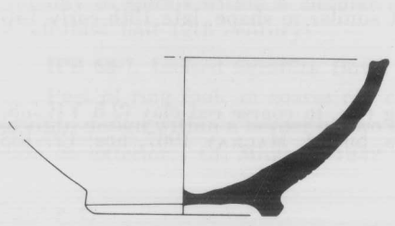

Fig. 2a et b. — Proto-maiolica bowl IP 3660.

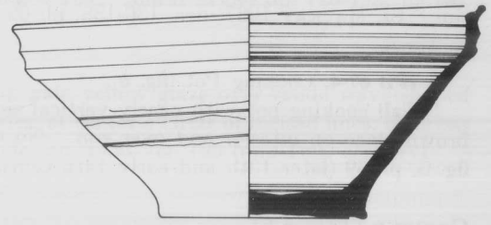

Fig. 3a et b. — Incised sgraffito bowl IPB 69-40.

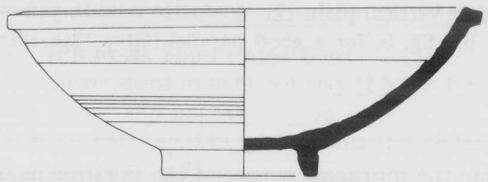

Fig. 4. — Plain glazed bowl IPB 69-41.

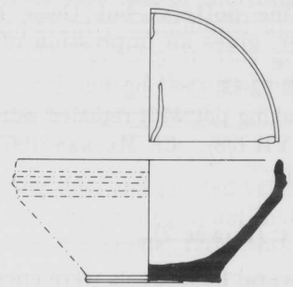

Fig. 5. — Plain glazed bowl IPB 67-1.

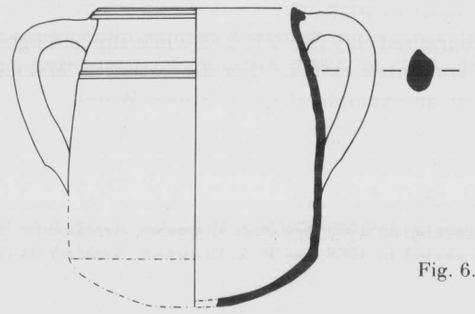

Fig. 6. — Cooking pot IPB 67-4.

parallels, but cf. discussion in MORGAN 1942, pp. 138-140, and MACKAY 1967, p. 264, on firing triangles, which "do not appear until the later 13th century".

IPB 69-41. Plain Glazed Bowl (**fig. 4**).

Large bowl with small ring foot, flaring sides, and outturned horizontal rim, in red clay (2.5 YR 5/6); light slip and yellow glaze on interior and over rim; on floor tripod marks. Cf. MORGAN 1942, pp. 58-63, figs. 40B (late 11th-early 12th century) and 45A (13th century).

IPB 67-1. Plain Glazed Bowl (**fig. 5**).

Small bowl with flat base, in reddish-yellow clay (5 YR 6/6); straight flaring sides and plain vertical rim with ridge on exterior; white slip and light greenish-yellow glaze on interior and over rim. Cf. MACKAY 1967, nos. 136-138, pl. 69 (unglazed but similar in shape, late 13th-early 14th century).

IPB 67-4. Cooking Pot (**fig. 6**).

Tall cooking pot with nearly vertical sides and flaring rim, in coarse red clay (2.5 YR 5/8); brown glaze on interior and over rim. No exact parallels, but cf. MACKAY 1967, nos. 127-133, fig. 5, pl. 69 (later 13th and early 14th centuries).

GROUP B (Tower 5).

A deposit with characteristics very similar to that in the building near Tower 14 was encountered inside Tower 5 (**fig. 1**)[14]. This is dated by four coins of Antonio Venerio (1382-1400) and it is probably also a result of operations associated with Manuel II's reconstruction of the Hexamilion in 1415. The fill contained many pieces of late Byzantine pottery, but these have not yet been properly studied. The following, however, gives an impression of the wares.

IPB 72-12. Cooking Pot.

Cooking pot with rounded sides, flanged, nearly vertical plain rim, in coarse reddish-yellow clay (5 YR 6/8). Cf. MACKAY 1967, no. 132, pl. 69, fig. 5, for a good parallel (later 13th-14th century).

GROUP C (Tower 2).

Several floor levels were encountered inside the southeast corner of the Fortress near Tower 2 (**fig. 1**)[15]. These all appear to be undisturbed and they preserve a succession of uses. The uppermost of these, above a tile floor, is dated by a coin of Andrea Contarini (1368-1382) and is thus presumably to be assigned to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.

IPB 68-8. Sgraffito Bowl or Plate.

Plain ring foot, in coarse red clay (2.5 YR 6/8); white slip and light green glaze on interior with crude sgraffito design of concentric circles. For decoration cf. MACKAY 1967, no. 17, pl. 63, fig. 1 (although IPB 68-8 is not an example of Olive-Brown Ware).

(14) Tower 5 was excavated in 1972; see P. A. CLEMENT, *ArchDelt* 28 (1973), 149.
(15) Tower 2 was excavated in 1968; see P. A. CLEMENT, *ArchDelt* 24 (1969), 116-118.

GROUP D (Tower 2).

Below this floor in the same area is a large deposit, probably representing a long period of use. A single concave coin, otherwise uncertain, provides a date from the 12th to the mid-14th century.

IPB 68-15. Sgraffito Bowl or Plate.

Single body sherd, in soft red clay (2.5 YR 6/6); yellow glaze on interior with sgraffito design, probably of spirals within a circular line. Cf. MORGAN 1942, Spiral Style, pp. 120-123, fig. 96, pl. xli (first half 12th century).

IPB 68-7. Incised Sgraffito Bowl.

Part of ring foot, in coarse red clay (10 R 5/6); pale yellow glaze over crude wave-shaped sgraffito design within a border of two concentric circles; at center a circle of incised lines; colorless glaze on exterior. Cf. MORGAN 1942, Medallion Style, no. 1436, fig. 125 (mid-12th century).

GROUP E.

The area of Tower 10, at the southwest corner of the Fortress (**fig. 1**), preserves further evidence of the ceramic history of Isthmia.[16] The material from this area is not technically a deposit and it cannot be dated by coins. It may ultimately be possible to separate this into several distinct groups since the pottery comes from both the interior of the tower and the series of rooms built outside the Fortress just east of the tower. At the time of Manuel II's rebuilding these latter were apparently abandoned and large quantities of fill were dumped into the tower interior. The pottery in this group is, accordingly, not entirely consistent and it probably represents use of the area, primarily in the thirteenth century, although later pieces may also be represented.

IPB 69-20. Slip-Painted Bowl.

Single sherd in light red clay (2.5 YR 6/8); bowl with flaring sides and pointed vertical rim; thin brown slip on exterior; on interior pale yellow glaze and slip-painted spiral motif. Cf. MORGAN 1942, no. 749, plate xxxiia (for design), no. 747, fig. 75a (for profile, 12th century).

IPB 69-5. Glaze-Painted Bowl.

Small bowl with slightly flaring ring foot, in coarse red clay (2.5 YR 5/6); rounded sides and plain rim; white slip and clear glaze on interior; design of crude spirals in green glaze. Cf. MORGAN 1942, nos. 508-547 (13th century).

IPB 69-38. Slip-Painted Bowl.

Large bowl with low ring foot, in red clay (2.5 YR 5/6); flaring slightly rounded sides and plain rim; buff slip on exterior; on interior slip-painted design of crude concentric circles and dots; pale yellow glaze on interior and over rim. Cf. MORGAN 1942, no. 778, fig. 79c, for profile (13th century).

(16) The exterior south of Tower 10 (formerly known as the Loukos Area) was excavated in 1969, the interior of the tower and the field immediately in front of it in 1972; see P. A. CLEMENT, *ArchDelt* 25 (1970), 163; 28 (1973), 149.

IPB 72-1. Plain-Glazed Bowl.

Bowl with low ring foot, in red clay (2.5 YR 6/6); flaring straight sides and pointed rim; white slip and clear glaze on interior and over rim; splotches of green glaze on and just under rim. No exact parallels at Athens or Corinth, but for profile cf. MORGAN 1942, no. 778, fig. 79c (13th century).

IPB 72-2. Matt-Painted Jug or Amphora.

Closed vessel with flat base and flaring sides, in pale brown clay (10 YR 8/3); on base matt-painted design of geometric and stylized floral (?) pattern. Cf. MACKAY 1967, nos. 79-84, pl. 68 (late 12th-early 14th century).

This brief survey indicates something of the variety of late Byzantine pottery found at Isthmia. Further study of these groups and the necessary full cataloging of all the pieces from them will undoubtedly allow greater chronological precision and establish firmer connections with wares published elsewhere. It is clear, however, that we have good evidence for the ceramic repertoire at Isthmia in the early fifteenth century: our Group A is large and securely dated. Groups B and C are probably from the same period, although they may be somewhat earlier. Groups D and E, on the other hand, establish connections with the better-known wares of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and they provide the framework for pushing our analysis into the still poorly known territory of the fourteenth century.

Timothy E. GREGORY.

CÉRAMIQUE D'OFFRANDE TROUVÉE DANS DES TOMBES BYZANTINES TARDIVES DE L'HIPPODROME DE THESSALONIQUE*

Dans le centre de Thessalonique se trouve aujourd'hui la place de l'Hippodrome, qui conserve dans ce nom des souvenirs historiques séculaires[1]. Sur la partie sud-ouest était construite, depuis le XIX^e^ siècle, l'église Saint-Constantin-et-Sainte-Hélène. Lorsqu'en 1972 elle a été démolie pour être reconstruite plus vaste, le Service archéologique des antiquités classiques de Thessalonique[2] a entrepris de fouiller le site pour retrouver les restes de l'Hippodrome de la période romaine tardive. Avant que la fouille n'arrive à cette couche, trente-deux tombes groupées en ligne ont été découvertes sur toute la surface du terrain, ainsi que les débris de beaucoup d'autres. Tout cela se trouve exactement au-dessus des restes des gradins sud-est de l'Hippodrome.

LES TOMBES.

Sur le terrain fouillé, mesurant 48,50 m × 22,50 m, outre les 32 tombes relativement bien conservées, les os épars, les bijoux, monnaies, tessons de céramique mélangés aux pierres, aux briques et à la terre provenant des tombes détruites, montraient l'étendue de la nécropole.

* Je voudrais remercier les Éphories des Antiquités Classiques et des Antiquités Byzantines de Thessalonique pour m'avoir permis de publier les céramiques découvertes dans la nécropole byzantine de la Place de l'Hippodrome, comme pour les facilités qui m'ont été offertes, durant mon étude, dans l'apothèque du Musée Archéologique où sont gardées ces trouvailles. Pour les photographies et les diapositives, je remercie le laboratoire photographique I. Ioannidès et L. Bartziotis. Les dessins ont été réalisés par El. Photoglou, étudiante.

(1) La vie de l'hippodrome avait cessé après le IV^e^ siècle ap. J.-C., mais les souvenirs amers de l'inique massacre de 7 000 Thessaloniciens par Théodose le Grand ne se sont pas éteints ; ce lieu, considéré comme saint, n'a plus été foulé pendant des siècles. Les voyageurs du XVIII^e^ s. le décrivent comme boisé et sans constructions.

(2) *ArchDelt* 29 (1973-74), Chroniques p. 656. Ce terrain est maintenant occupé par la nouvelle église Saint-Constantin-et-Sainte-Hélène.

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RECHERCHES
SUR LA
CÉRAMIQUE BYZANTINE

ÉDITÉ PAR
V. DÉROCHE et J.-M. SPIESER

ACTES DU COLLOQUE ORGANISÉ PAR
L'ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'ATHÈNES
ET
L'UNIVERSITÉ DE STRASBOURG II
(Centre de Recherches sur l'Europe Centrale et Sud-Orientale)

(Athènes 8-10 avril 1987)

ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'ATHÈNES
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Dépositaire :
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LISTE USUELLE DES ABRÉVIATIONS DU *BCH*

AA	*Archäologischer Anzeiger.*
ABSA (ou *BSA*)	*Annual of the British School at Athens.*
ABV	J. D. BEAZLEY, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters.*
ActaArch	*Acta archaeologica* (Copenhague).
AD	*Antike Denkmäler.*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology.*
AJPh	*American Journal of Philology.*
AM	*Athenische Mitteilungen.*
AnnScAtene	*Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atène e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente*
AntCl	*L'Antiquité classique.*
AntKunst	*Antike Kunst.*
ArchAnAth	*Ἀρχαιολογικὰ Ἀνάλεκτα ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν.*
ArchCl	*Archeologia Classica.*
ArchDelt	*Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον.*
ArchEph	*Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερίς.*
AttiMGr	*Atti e Memorie della Società Magna Grecia.*
ARV²	J. D. BEAZLEY, *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 2nd edition.
BCH	*Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique.*
BEFAR	*Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome.*
BerlWPr	*Berliner Winckelmannsprogramm.*
BollArte	*Bollettino d'Arte.*
BrBr	H. BRUNN - Fr. BRUCKMANN, *Denkmäler griechischer und römischer Sculptur.*
BritMusQuart	*British Museum Quarterly.*
BSA (ou *ABSA*)	*Annual of the British School at Athens.*
BSR (ou *PBSR*)	*Papers of the British School at Rome.*
BullAntBesch	*Bulletin van de Vereeniging tot bevordering der Kennis van de antieke Beschaving.*
BullInstArchBulg	*Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique bulgare.*
BullInstClSt	*Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies.*
BullMFA	*Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts.*
BullMMA	*Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History.*
CalStudClassAnt	*California Studies in Classical Antiquity.*
CIG	*Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum.*
ClPh	*Classical Philology.*
ClQ	*Classical Quarterly.*
ClRev	*Classical Review.*
CRAI	*Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.*
CVA	*Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum.*
DA	DAREMBERG et SAGLIO, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités.*
EAD (ou *EADélos*)	*Exploration archéologique de Délos.*